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IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

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DNR HOLDS PUBLIC HEARING ON CONCRETE STANDARDS FOR MANURE STORAGE

DES MOINES — The DNR is asking for public input on a proposed change in the minimum construction standards for concrete manure storage structures.

The public hearing will be held at 1 p.m. on Sept. 11 in the fourth floor conference room of the Wallace Building, 502 E. Ninth St., in Des Moines.

The change in standards was required by state law, particularly for karst areas. DNR inspections have supported the need for new minimum standards, with inspectors finding cracks, inadequate concrete thickness and other problems.

Starting Jan. 1, 2004, the rule would apply to concrete used in formed manure storage structures such as below-building pits in confinement feeding operations. Separate standards are proposed for dry manure storage and more stringent standards are proposed for structures built in karst or areas with known sinkholes.

The DNR proposal would set minimum standards for compressive strength, reinforcement such as rebar, footing depth and concrete thickness. According to Sara Smith, a DNR engineer, the standards are only the minimum requirements, because each site is different and the structures should be tailored to the location.

“We would urge producers and contractors to check the technical literature or to consult an engineer when designing and building a concrete structure,” said Smith.

Technical information can be found at the American Society for Testing and Materials, the American Concrete Institute, MidWest Plan Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, she added.

Comments can be presented orally or in writing at the public hearing. People with special requirements such as mobility or hearing impairments should contact the DNR prior to the meeting so that accommodations are available

Written comments can be sent to Sara Smith, DNR – Animal Feeding Operations, Wallace Building, 502 E. Ninth St, Des Moines, IA 50319 or faxed to 515-281-8895 until 4:30 p.m., Sept. 11.

For more information, contact Sara Smith, DNR engineer, 515-242-5521.

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DNR ENCOURAGES ANIMAL PRODUCERS TO FILE MANURE MANAGEMENT PLANS

DES MOINES — The DNR is encouraging animal producers who must have a manure management plan (MMP) to avoid a penalty by submitting a plan before March 1, 2004.

“This is a great opportunity for producers who have never filed a plan to avoid a substantial penalty of \$1,500,” said Gene Tinker, coordinator of the DNR animal feeding operations program.

Most producers with an animal unit capacity of more than 500 are required to have a manure management plan on file with the DNR. Tinker said this grace period is only for not having a required plan, not for other violations such as a fish kill or causing a water quality problem.

“I would encourage anyone who should have an MMP to take advantage of this offer,” Tinker said. “Until March 1, the DNR will not be actively looking for producers without plans.”

If people are concerned that the DNR is being too lenient by offering a grace period, Tinker says producers with a late MMP must pay a \$250 filing fee that most compliant producers did not have to pay. They will also be required to pay indemnity fees and have a phosphorus-index based plan sooner than other producers.

Tinker said that it’s not fair to producers who are complying with the law and are now paying annual submittal fees to have neighbors who don’t have plans and aren’t complying.

Producers can use the DNR forms to calculate animal unit capacity. Plans must be submitted on DNR forms, available on the DNR website at

<http://www.state.ia.us/epd/wastewtr/feedlot/manure.htm>. Hard copies of the form are available at DNR field offices. Iowa State University Extension county offices can provide forms, although a copying fee may be charged.

Manure management plans have been required since 1995. Plans are required for confinement feeding operations that meet either of the following:

- The operation has an animal unit capacity of more than 500 animal units and the operation was constructed or expanded after May 31, 1985, or
- A person applies manure from a confinement feeding operation located outside of Iowa on land in Iowa (does not apply if the operation's capacity is 500 animal units or less).

Plans are also required at least 30 to 60 days prior to construction of a manure storage structure that will serve a confinement operation with an animal unit capacity of more than 500 animal units, equal to 1250 finishing swine or 500 cattle.

Producers with more than one site should check with the local DNR field office to see if an MMP is required, even if each facility has less than 500 animal units.

More information, including a list of MMP developers and examples of application agreements, is available on the Iowa Manure Management Action Group's website at <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/immag/ppr.html>.

For more information about how to fill out a plan or who needs one, call your local DNR field office at one of the following locations:

- Manchester, 563-927-2640
- Mason City, 641-424-4073
- Spencer, 712-262-4177
- Atlantic, 712-243-1934
- Des Moines, 515-725-0268
- Washington, 319-653-2135

For more information, contact Gene Tinker, Coordinator, 515-281-3103.

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FIRE IN KOSSUTH COUNTY LEADS TO HOG COMPOSTING

WEST BEND — The DNR is working with Kossuth County hog producer Jim Fehr on how to dispose of 183 sows that were destroyed in a fire on Sept. 1 northeast of West Bend.

“There are four basic options to deal with animal mortalities, including rendering, composting, incineration, and burial at a landfill or on-site with a waiver,” said John

Pecchia, an environmental specialist with the Mason City DNR field office. Rendering and incineration were ruled out because of the condition of the carcasses and the number of carcasses, respectively.

Burying the animals in a landfill was a possibility, but Pecchia said that we are trying to divert organic matter, from grass clippings to animals, away from landfills. Burial on site is usually the least desirable option, but it wasn't possible at this site because of a high ground water table.

He advocates composting as a way to protect groundwater and recycle organic matter – breaking down the dead animal into stable humus that can be land applied to the soil, and put the nutrients back into the land.

“This is a good opportunity to try this technology on a mass mortality, because this is a relatively manageable number compared to a 4,000-head finishing operation,” Pecchia said. “Also, we’re not dealing with disease issues.”

The dead sows will be placed in two layers on an 18-inch deep bed of woodchips, with 12 inches of wood chips on top and six to 12 inches of wood chips between the layers. Pecchia said layering the hogs in a sandwich of wood chips protects groundwater, and allows water to enter the compost windrows from below while the top layer of wood chips absorbs odors.

The DNR will be monitoring the site for about six months until composting is completed. The DNR is also asking the producer to monitor the temperature in the windrows as an indicator of how well the composting is progressing.

In a non-emergency situation, producers are required to follow state rules for burials, incineration or composting.

For more information, contact John Pecchia at 641-424-4073.

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FISH KILL NEAR POCAHONTAS TOTALS MORE THAN 100,000 FISH

POCAHONTAS — DNR biologists have estimated the fish kill in Lizard Creek near Pocahontas at slightly more than 104,000 fish.

The fish kill appears to have originated at the waste water treatment plant for the city of Pocahontas during the Labor Day weekend. Maintenance work was being done on the plant and effluent being released to Lizard Creek had not been fully treated. The DNR recorded very high levels of ammonia in the water coming from the plant on Sunday, Aug. 31. Ammonia in the water can be highly toxic to fish.

By Monday, Sept. 1, conditions at the plant had improved significantly and the water had cleared up noticeably. Live fish have also been observed this week by DNR staff along the eight-mile stretch of the stream that experienced the kill.

“The city of Pocahontas has been cooperating in fixing the problem and we’ve been able to see the water improve greatly as a result,” said Cindy Martens, an environmental specialist for the DNR’s field office in Spencer.

Most of the fish killed, approximately 100,000, were smaller species such as minnows, shiners and chubs. DNR biologists also observed smallmouth bass, northern pike, sunfish, bullheads, stonecat, suckers and carp during investigation of the kill.

The value of the fish killed has been placed at \$15,751.90 and the DNR also incurred \$1,143 in expenses doing the fish count. In addition to fish restitution, it is likely that the DNR will also be pursuing a penalty against the city of Pocahontas after the investigation has been completed.

For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395.